this a good idea but doubted whether I had the strength to handle a heavy ax. Only Karpov decided to go along with me.

When we reported to Fetisov to apply for work as carpenters, he inquired if we had experience in this trade. I answered that prisoners sentenced to forced labor need not necessarily be experts in the jobs assigned to them. He agreed and assigned us to the carpentry commando engaged in building market stands. The work was divided between two gangs, thirty men in each. Both foremen wanted to have us. I chose the slow-moving, quiet Ukrainian, Ostapenko, a peasant serving a ten-year sentence for agrarian riots.

Proud of the preference I had shown for him, Ostapenko at first gave me the easiest jobs, pretending that they required education. For example, he had me nail boards to the frame of the stand, explaining that without education one could not properly count the nails and keep them in a straight line. But I asked him to let me hew the poles, the most important job. The prison bought roundwood, and the prisoners had to square the logs into four-by-four or six-by-six poles with axes. Some logs were green and crooked, others knotty; the axes were not very sharp. Ostapenko chose the easiest logs for me, sharpened my ax himself, patiently taught me how to hold it and how to strike. Indeed, under pretense of giving me instruction, he tried to do the work for me.

The prison had a contract for two types of stands: square, low stands for meat and vegetables, and high, octagonal, turret-like constructions for newspapers and soft drinks. The square stands used more boards than poles, while the turrets required long, smoothly hewn poles and were crowned with a pyramidal roof. My ambition was to hew the long poles, but it was not easy to make the grade and I never did get so far as to build the octagonal roofs. With this limitation, I acquired some experience in carpentry and can still handle the tools of this venerable trade fairly well.

Karpov was then busy in the joiner shop drawing blueprints for pieces of furniture. Since we both had access to tools, the administration decided to transfer us from the tower to a building at the rear of the Castle, isolated from the rest of the prison. The rear building consisted of a single row of double cells. It was a quiet place, but its memory evokes a gruesome picture.

The building was separated from the Castle by a narrow strip of courtyard. Our windows were some four feet above the ground, and just in front of them, on the ground level, were the windows of the cells in which prisoners sentenced to death were awaiting execution. We saw them milling about in their cages or lying on the floor in fetters and manacles, often with hands chained behind them. We recognized some of them through the bars and could occasionally